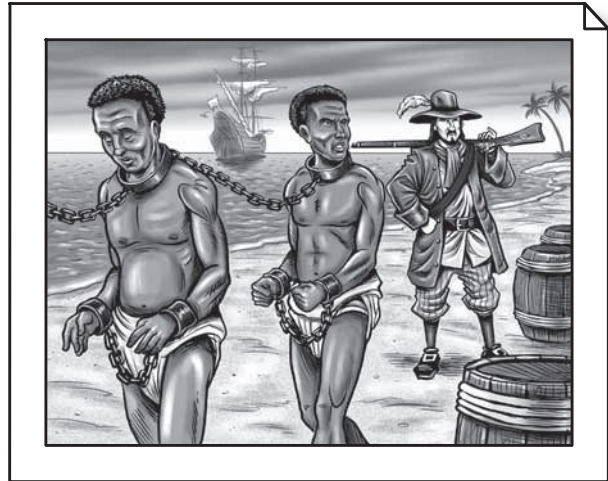




The Atlantic Slave Trade

In the 1400s, the Portuguese explored and set up trading posts along the coast of Africa. Soon after, the Dutch, English, and French set up their own ports along the African coast. European merchants traded guns, tools, and cloth for gold, ivory, and slaves. Quickly, the Europeans found slaves to be the most important item of African trade.

Slavery had existed since ancient times. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Indians, Arabs, and Aztecs enslaved defeated enemies. The word “slave” comes from the large number of Slavs taken from southern Russia in Roman times. When African kingdoms fought each other, the winner took the defeated enemies as slaves. By the 1500s, African kingdoms were selling the slaves to European traders.



Growing quickly into a profitable business, the Atlantic slave trade began in the 1500s. Sugar, coffee, and tobacco plantations in French, Dutch, and English colonies needed laborers. Workers were needed for Spanish mines and Portuguese sugar plantations. Many slaves were taken to these colonies. About 400,000 slaves were sent to Britain’s North American colonies. African traders took captives from the interior of the continent and brought them to coastal trading posts. There, the captives were exchanged for other goods, like cloth, rum, weapons, and gunpowder.

The Atlantic slave trade was one part of a trade network known as the triangular trade. On the first part of the trip, merchant ships brought manufactured goods to Africa. They traded the items, like guns and cloth, for slaves. On the second leg, called the Middle Passage, slaves were taken by ship to the West Indies in the Caribbean Sea. Merchants traded slaves for tobacco, sugar, and molasses. On the last section of the trip, the products were taken to places like Nantes, France; Bristol, England; and Salem, Massachusetts.

During the trip from Africa to the West Indies, slaves were chained below the decks of ships. The Middle Passage was a horrible time for the slaves. Hundreds were stuffed into a small vessel. Sometimes, up to half of the Africans on board died during the voyage because of harsh conditions.

In the 1500s, about 2,000 slaves were sent to the Americas each year. The peak of the Atlantic slave trade was in the 1780s. During this time, more than 80,000 Africans were sold into slavery in the Americas each year. The Atlantic slave trade was finally stopped in the 1800s. By that time, about 10 million Africans had been sold into slavery in the Americas.



The Atlantic Slave Trade

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. The most important item of African trade to Europeans was _____.

- A. gold
- B. ivory
- C. guns
- D. slaves

2. The Atlantic slave trade began in the _____.

- A. 1400s
- B. 1500s
- C. 1780s
- D. 1800s

3. On the _____ leg of the triangular trade voyage, merchants brought manufactured goods to Africa.

- A. first
- B. second
- C. third
- D. all of the above

4. The second leg of the triangular trade voyage was called the _____.

- A. Middle Passage
- B. African Voyage
- C. Center Channel
- D. Slave Corridor

5. Sometimes, up to half of the Africans on board a slave ship _____ during the voyage.

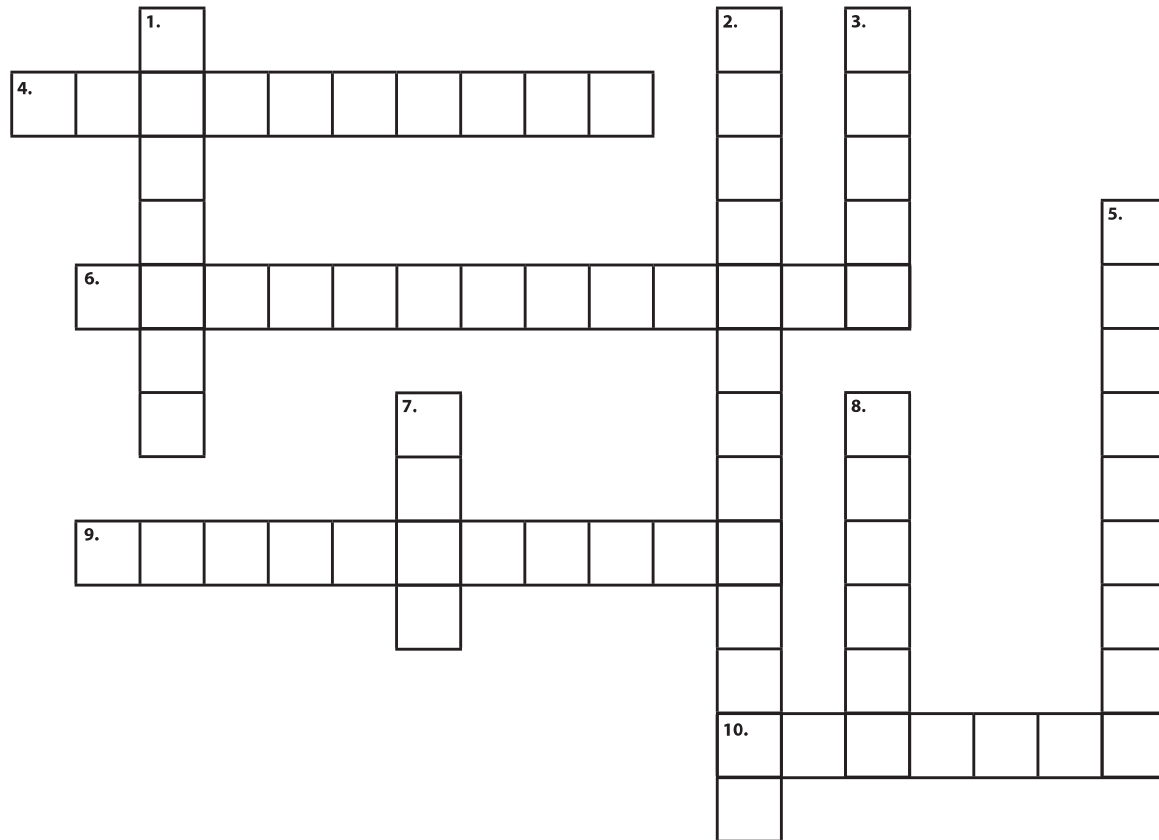
- A. got the bubonic plague
- B. tried to escape
- C. died from harsh conditions
- D. got seasick



The Atlantic Slave Trade

Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

4. The Atlantic slave trade was one part of the _____ trade network.
6. Slaves were chained below the decks of ships during the _____
_____ or second leg of the triangular trade voyage.
9. Sugar, coffee, and tobacco _____ in French, Dutch, and English colonies
needed laborers.
10. African _____ took captives from the interior of the continent and
exchanged them for other goods.

DOWN

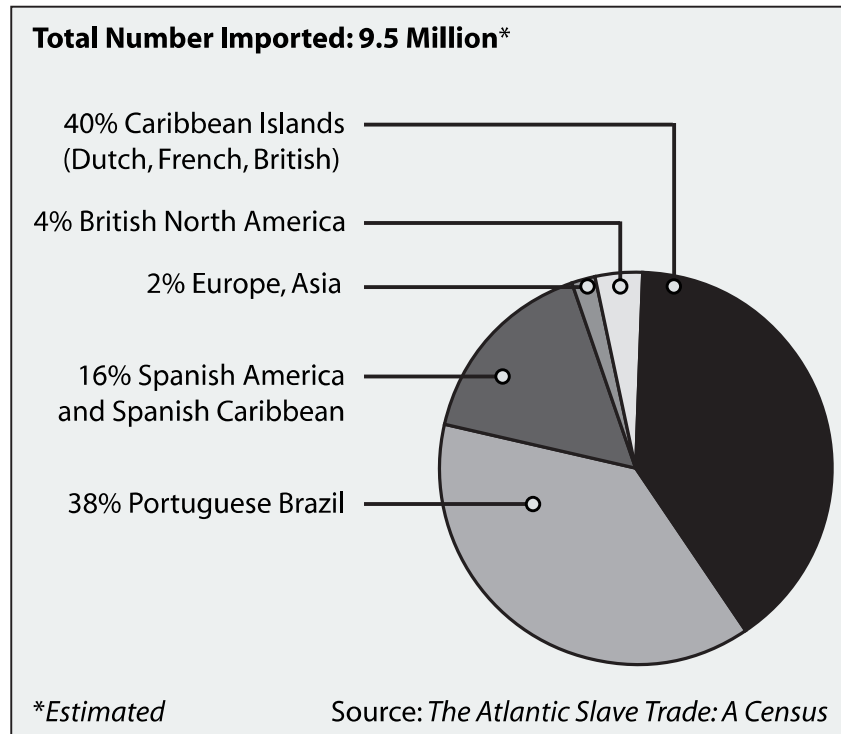
1. By the 1800s, 10 _____ Africans had been sold into slavery in
the Americas.
2. On the last leg of the triangular trade voyage, products like tobacco, sugar, and
molasses were taken to France, England, and _____.
3. The word “_____” comes from the large number of Slavs taken from
southern Russia in Roman times.
5. European _____ traded guns, tools, and cloth for gold, ivory, and slaves.
7. The _____ of the Atlantic slave trade was in the 1780s.
8. Europeans set up trading posts along the coast of _____.



The Atlantic Slave Trade

Graph – African Slaves in the Americas, 1451–1870

Use the graph to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. What percentage of African slaves went to British North America?

2. What percentage of slaves went to Portuguese Brazil?

3. What percentage of slaves did not go to the Americas?



The Atlantic Slave Trade

Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

1. How did the slave trade affect West African states? Look in your textbook, on the Internet, or at the library to find out.
2. Children of slaves were born into slavery. Do you think it would be worse to be captured and enslaved or to be born into slavery? Explain your answer.
3. Europeans tasted new foods for the first time when food items were brought back from the Americas. Pretend that you are a European in the 1500s and that you are tasting corn for the first time. Write a paragraph describing what it is like.



Quiz: The Atlantic Slave Trade

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. During this time period, the most important item of African trade to Europeans was gold.
- _____ 2. On the third leg of the triangular trade voyage, slaves were brought to the West Indies.
- _____ 3. The Atlantic slave trade began in the 1500s.
- _____ 4. The peak of the Atlantic slave trade was in the 1780s.
- _____ 5. The Pacific slave trade was one part of the circular trade network.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. By the 1800s, about _____ Africans had been sold into slavery in the Americas.
- A. 10,000
 - B. 100,000
 - C. 10 million
 - D. 100 million

7. Slaves were traded for _____ in the West Indies.
- A. sugar
 - B. tobacco
 - C. molasses
 - D. all of the above

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. What was the Middle Passage?
